

CURRICULAR QUESTIONS AND MODEL ANSWERS

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"There is now general agreement that the word 'aims' should be used at a more general and abstract level of purpose and the term 'objectives' should be used in a more specific way". Lawton, D., *SOCIAL CHANGE, EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PLANNING*, University of London Press, 1973, p.14.

"A prophet is not without honour save in his own country". It is, therefore, not particularly surprising that in his discussion of curriculum models Hall¹ makes no mention of the home grown type, i.e. Australian models. Both Campbell² and Wheeler³ have produced complex models relating to the subject. Because he says that no single model will convey all the important ideas involved, Campbell produces three conceptual models. The first⁴ is concerned with the elements of the curriculum, purposes and aims; the scope of expected outcomes, aims or objectives; teaching culminating in learning experiences; and evaluation. The model is too detailed to reproduce here, but repays study, as the visual presentation suggests both process and relationship and the code-words used represent ideas of considerable complexity.

The second model is concerned with the definition of objectives and considers in detail ways of making choices about expected outcomes, identifying both general ideas and specific learnings.⁵

The third model is more ambitious in that the metaphor used is that of a computer-controlled production line applied to total curriculum planning.⁶ Data and programme inputs are considered, flow line (the logical sequence to be followed in developing educational changes) is indicated, feedback and by-pass are shown and outputs as well as throughputs are evaluated. This model indicates not only what should happen, but also what does happen; it provides a variety of possible choices and demands a conscious effort from curriculum developers to identify precisely what they are doing and why.

My own work presents initially a simple five-phase model of curriculum process.

1. The selection of aims, goals and objectives.
2. The selection of learning experiences calculated to help in the attainment of these aims, goals and objectives.
3. The selection of content (subject matter) through which certain types of experience may be offered.
4. The organization and integration of learning experiences and content with respect to the teaching-learning process within school and classroom.
5. The evaluation of all aspects of phases 2, 3, and 4 in attaining the goals detailed in phase 1.

These phases, though discussed separately and considered as sequential both temporally and operationally, are related and interdependent and combine to form a cyclical process.⁷ This simple model is elaborated throughout the book and phase relationships and flow of process are clarified.⁸

Models (or paradigms) imply decisions about what variables and what interrelationships are important; they often represent these variables or relationships in graphic or outline form; they can be explicit or implicit. The choice of a model, whether deliberate or unthinking, is intimately related to a writer's viewpoint or frame of reference. It is of interest, therefore, to see that Hall implies that the separate components of the curriculum process are aims and objectives, content, teaching, learning and assessment.⁹ I have commented elsewhere on the need for definition of terms and for some sort of standard vocabulary in education.¹⁰ Let me say here that I doubt whether processes have components. My own extensive discussions of the curriculum process have been couched in terms of phases because the process is dynamic. Further, none of Hall's first four models contains any reference to choice of learning experiences. Yet modern thinking about objectives states fairly categorically that objectives have both a behavioural and a substantive component (one compares or contrasts or classifies, or whatever, in the field of physics or politics or linguistics).

I have written about illicit curriculum process (mainly the derivation of aims, goals or objectives from content) on several occasions.¹¹ All four models suffer from this illicit process and I consider it quite wrong to say that they have one thing in common, "their dependence on the early work of Ralph Tyler". In the next paragraph Hall cites Tyler's four fundamental questions. Nos. 2 and 3 are worth quoting:

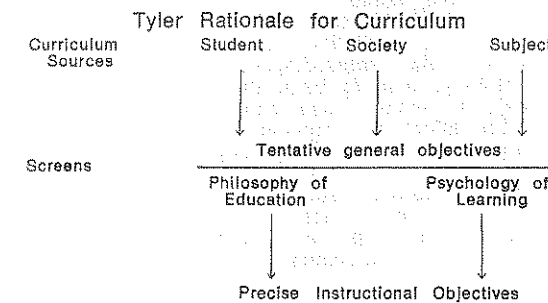
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?¹² There is no mention of content.

Hall has apparently confused "learning experience" with "content", as so many casual writers about curriculum do. Yet Tyler specifically states that a "learning experience" is not the same as the content with which a course deals nor the activities performed by the teacher". It "refers to the interaction between the learner and the ex-

ternal conditions in the environment to which he can react".¹³

In fact, Tyler's book implies two models; one concerned with the derivation of precise instructional objectives (see Fig. 1), the other with the planning of instructional procedures. (see Fig. 2).

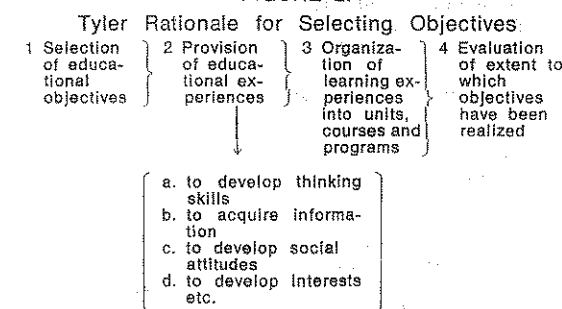
FIGURE 1.



The learners, the society in which they live, and the subject disciplines are the three sources of significant educational objectives. Between them they provide more objectives than any school should attempt to incorporate in its programme. Therefore, in order to select a few highly important and consistent objectives, it is necessary to screen the heterogeneous collection in accordance with the school's educational and social philosophy and ensure that they are in conformity with conditions intrinsic in learning. The resulting objectives must then be stated in terms of the changes to take place in the students.

The model for planning a programme of instruction then takes the following form. (see Fig. 2).

FIGURE 2.



Hall then produces a list of additional questions comparing the curriculum process with a journey and introduces another eight or ten undefined terms e.g. 5. What sort of map shall we provide? (Educational technology). 8. How do we tell whether we are on the right track? (Evaluation). 9. How can we tell if we have arrived? (Assessment). 11. What mistakes did we make? (Feedback).

The fifth and sixth models tabled by Hall¹⁴ offer an interesting comparison. Kerr's model (No. 5) is the only one in the paper which includes "learning experiences", though it is otherwise deficient

in process phases.* As far as I can see, Halliwell's model (No. 6) has nothing to offer in the curriculum field, because it is just as applicable to therapy. Hall states that a weakness of these models is "the implication that all the outcomes of an educational process are amenable to evaluation (or assessment)". This is not (at the present moment in time) true. For example many attitudinal aims cannot be reliably assessed.¹⁵ This argument is somewhat confused, as the example given in the last sentence would suggest, not that these outcomes cannot be assessed, but that the assessment is not a reliable one. Ease of assessment or reliability of measurement is quite different from the question whether some characteristic, process or product can or cannot be measured, assessed or evaluated. Does the last sentence quoted mean that attitudinal aims cannot be assessed at all, or that assessments are not reliable? Whatever it means, attitudinal aims are constantly being assessed and priests, teachers, psychiatrists and social workers are certificated, often by those who object to behavioural objectives because the term "behavioural" conjures up visions of the Skinnerian teacher with the "student in the booth strapped up with a variety of teaching-learning devices".¹⁶ It doesn't matter whether we talk about 'behavioural objectives' or 'performance objectives' or 'operational statements of aims', we must define an aim, end, goal, or objective by describing or illustrating the kind of behaviour the student is expected to acquire so that we can recognize such behaviour when we see it.¹⁷ In the same way we must offer some consistent definitions of assessment, evaluation and measurement.¹⁸ Obviously, for Hall, the first two are different procedures "By assessment one means, How successfully have students achieved the course aims; evaluation covers the efficacy of teaching, feedback from students and evaluation of the assessment procedures".¹⁹

This may be a rather tortuous way of suggesting that evaluation should serve two purposes. The first is concerned with the nature and extent of changes in the behaviour of individuals and groups; the second with the choices made in all phases of the curriculum process. On this view, evaluation is "the process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives".²⁰

It appears quite wrong to assert that "specific objectives are rarely formally assessed. For practical purposes it is course aims that form the basis of an examination".²¹ If I understand Hall aright, he ranks goals (some of which are translated into hopes!), aims, and objectives in an order of increasing specificity. Despite this departure from the general practice of writing about curriculum,* the only evidence produced for the above statement is Hall's flat that course aims "are the aims which are assessed (e.g. by examination)".²² Because of the generality of what Hall calls "goals" and the difficulty of producing appropriate criteria (how does one judge whether an individual is a

*In its original form it is considerably more complicated than as depicted by Hall.

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well-educated secondary school leaver, a qualified doctor, priest or engineer?) it is precisely the specific objectives that tend to be formally assessed. An 'educated' secondary school leaver is one who has passed the terminal examination, a qualified doctor or engineer, one who has passed the required examinations which invariably test what the examiner sees as the specific objectives of required courses. If, as Hall says, "objectives show what a student should be able to do as a result of a learning experience", I see no reason why he should assert that these are rarely formally assessed. Moreover, it is erroneous to say that specific objectives say nothing about the teaching approach. In his neglect of Phase 2 of the curriculum process,²³ Hall ignores the fact that the nature of the intended behavioural outcome says a great deal about the teaching approach. When intended outcomes are predominantly orotic in nature, they demand instructional approaches quite different from those necessary for cognitive processes or psychomotor skills. The need for clarity and specificity is further exemplified by Hall's discussion of objectives and taxonomies. If objectives are derived from course aims, he says, a classification exists. If objectives are formulated first, a classification is necessary in order to make assessment possible. (He does not say why). Grouping of objectives into major classifications directly linked with aims produces a taxonomy of educational objectives ("man-made (*sic*) and subjective"). "The Bloom taxonomies are only one way of ordering knowledge and attitudes".²⁴ Apparently Hall equates knowledge with the cognitive domain, which Bloom does not, as knowledge is the first and lowest category of six.

Hall assumes in his Fig. 7 and says in his text that goals are the general outcomes of courses of study.²⁵ Would that they were! Such an erroneous statement ignores the distinction between *intended outcomes* and *actual outcomes*, between what we aim at and what we get, between our purposes and the extent to which they are realized. Goals, aims and objectives are *intended* outcomes: it is *actual* outcomes that are assessed, measured or evaluated, (though it should be pointed out that the second function of evaluation may necessitate some consideration of intended outcomes). It is equally misleading to say that detailed aims are assessed (e.g. by examination). What may be assessed is the change in student behaviour which is relevant to that particular aim. Evaluation of the aim is a different sort of process, akin to the philosophical and psychological screening suggested by Tyler.²⁶

I cannot see that Hall's model 7 would in any way overcome Eisner's objection to behavioural objectives. In fact, no curriculum model is required to deal with them, only a little logic, a little psychology, some reasoned discourse, a little straight use of words.

1. Behavioural objectives "are derived from curriculum theory, which assumes it is possible to

predict what the outcomes of instruction will be".²⁷ No curriculum theorist with whom I am familiar assumes anything of the sort: this is an assumption about curriculum theorists made by opponents of behavioural objectives. An aim, an end, a goal, an objective is something aimed at, something the teacher (and presumably the learner) wishes to see accomplished, some change in behaviour (behaviour is anything a person thinks or feels or does). In my lexicon, predictions are not purposes (Tyler's term) or goals. Meteorologists predict, not always successfully; punters back their fancy (and have hopes): in neither case can the efforts of the operator affect the outcome (unless the punter suborns one or more stable-boys). The instructor in the educational context (where he may be either teacher or learner) sets up instructional situations and engages in processes designed to make the actual outcomes approach as closely as possible to the intended outcomes.

2. "Various subject matters place constraints upon objectives".²⁸ What constraints? Why? What Hall is doing here is accepting Eisner's *ex cathedra* pronouncements. Yet long before Eisner produced his "expressive objectives" (which, if words mean anything, are not objectives at all) he wrote that broadly couched aims developed at the school-curriculum level must be translated into course objectives—"this task is performed daily, for if teachers are to teach, decisions about curriculum at the level of the course must be made".²⁹ It would be more realistic to say that many educational objectives can be attained through the use of almost any subject matter. "In arts, behaviours to be developed cannot easily be specified". On the contrary, the behaviours to be developed are in many, if not most, cases, well defined. The ballet mistress and the music-teacher aim at developing quite specific skills; so does the instructor in ceramics, or painting or sculpture. If such behaviours cannot be specified, then a lot of people in university and college departments of drama, music and fine art are earning money under false pretences. What is usually at issue is the *value* of the performance or product; and the more this departs from established and customary modes, the more difficult it is to measure, assess or evaluate.

3. "Not all (or even most) outcomes of curriculum are amenable to measurement".³⁰ Hall has already said that "it is not (at the present moment in time) true that all of the outcomes of an educational process are amenable to evaluation (or assessment)". If an educational outcome cannot be *measured*, or *assessed* or *evaluated*, I doubt if it can even be recognized. Writers, sometimes even those in the field, get so mixed up about what they mean by measurement, assessment and evaluation that they end up with a set of equally confused readers. I may be simpleminded, but it seems to me that if we can recognize the existence of a characteristic or a product, we automatically make an assessment of the "few—many" or "more—less" kind. Though he does not report the median, mean or modal number of daffodils, the poet at

least says there was a host, and a golden one at that. As far as the individual student is concerned, the teacher should be interested in assessments (judgments) of the "more—less" kind, though he may want a better calibrated scale, and possibly a more objective one.

Hall's curriculum model (Fig. 7), though much too simple, is useful in that it emphasizes ends to the point of redundancy; it is deficient in that it lumps three distinct phases of curriculum process (Phases 2-4) under the rubric "Teaching and learning". All curriculum is concerned with teaching and learning. In lay terms, there is little distinction between goal, aim and objective and, while many writers tend to make them interchangeable, I see no reason to muddy the waters of discourse further by the introduction of "hopes" ("many important course aims are long-term 'hopes'").³¹ My plea for clarity falls on deaf ears.

All the models discussed by Hall seem to me to be extraordinarily simplistic. To those who are interested in such things I would recommend those of Taba,³² Goodlad and Richter,³³ Saylor and Alexander,³⁴ Johnson,³⁵ or even an Australian one.

Notes and References:

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- 4 Campbell—p.48.
- 5 *ibid.*, p.55.
- 6 *ibid.*, p.57.
- 7 Wheeler—pp.30-1.
- 8 Wheeler—See Fig. 2, p.52.

- 9 Hall—p.62.
- 10 Wheeler, D. K.—CURRICULUM CONCEPTS AND CONCEPTUAL CLARITY, Journal of Curriculum Studies, 6, 2, (November) 1974, 112-119.
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- 21 Hall—p.67.
- 22 *ibid.*
- 23 Wheeler, 1967—See pp.129-177.
- 24 Hall—p.68.
- 25 *ibid.*, p.67.
- 26 Wheeler, 1967—On this, see Chapter 10.
- 27 Hall—p.68.
- 28 *ibid.*, p.68.
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